Meeting Sunday, February 3, 13

4pm @ Sasona Cooperaive

Present:

McAllen, Victor, Molly, Jesse, Hannah, Leslie, Travis, Nolan, Mike, Hillary, Bridget, Donny, Chris, Greg

McAllen – a note about the mission statement, “offering education services and events” is a central concept to him. He had two motivations to starting a co-op:

1. open to more people
2. creating a community center

Don’t forget number two. He visits another co-op that offers classes, supports artists, and facilitates networking.

First agenda item: March 1st move-in?

Hannah – Gault will be budgeting for vacancies until the 1st of April to help with transition time. Interested in immediate occupancy: Hannah, Ryan, McAllen, Mike, Donny, Gatlin, Bridget, Jesse.

Gatlin – Are we members of CHEA if we move in? Are we associates at Sasona? When is it a co-op?

McAllen – we have current tenants’ leasing dates, they are staggered over 12 months. What are we doing about current residents?

Gatlin – when are we a co-op (date/ratio of occupants who are members of the co-op?)

Victor – we will be becoming landlords, and maintenance procedures need to be figured out for the current occupants.

Gatlin – will create a googlevoice for this purpose.

Jesse – what is the closing date? What will the co-op look like next meeting?

Donny – perhaps 10 people need to move in until we set up co-op structures? Maintenance crew will be a mix of the first people moving in. Phasing in co-op systems will need to be done.

Hannah – Let’s start operating as a co-op day 1. Sunday meetings?

Gatlin – Let’s do it. Labor systems and others could begin perhaps when ½ of residents are co-opers. We need calendars and a maintenance committee to start now.

Hannah – Labor could be decided at Sunday meetings until that point.

Nolan – we need to have a meeting at Gault to make it accessible to current residents. He feels uncomfortable about making decisions without consent of the residents.

Hannah – Not allowed to do the yet. When we close on the property, we should have a plan (options) to share with them.

Nolan – Let’s be sure to talk to residents day 1.

Mike – Should we ask Daniel if this is still the case? (Hannah will do this)

Gatlin – This is before as soon as possible, so we should have options to bring in to the residents. Our current work is not unproductive.

Donny- we do have the written letter prepared to hand out when we are able.

Chris – massive decision making needs to occur, he wants to see details of everyone’s vision.

Mike – suggested this before. He wants to include this on wiki—useful for mission statement supplement.

Molly – lets prepare different approaches for various types of people.

Hannah – Send out agenda items!

Agenda item 2: mission statement

McAllen – \*reads current mission statement\* [Our mission is to maintain an affordable, member-controlled cooperative household that provides its residents and wider community with the opportunities for empowerment that they find meaningful.  Our primary means of doing so are by offering educational programming, coordination of our resources, and the cultivation of a mutually supportive environment.  Working from the belief that we are often stronger together than as individuals, we seek to create a cooperative culture that helps people to live more joyful, interesting, and interconnected lives.]

Mike – wants to add “free of oppression”

Hannah, Gatlin, Mike – talk about phrasing but ultimately agree.

Molly – wants to include “collective” and “solidarity”. Also “allies” as it shows our recognition of the current work already being done. Also should include reference to the greater movement going on to expansion.

McAllen – will wordsmith about all suggestions

Greg – is “meaningful” too open/vague?

Hannah- what she had in mind was that we will ask people WHAT THEY WANT not just doing what we want.

Greg - likes that sentiment-- do we need to be clearer/less mushy in that wording?? (in reference to the need to support activities which people find meaningful)

Molly - is the original phrasing limited? supports the explanation being more detailed

Jesse - meaningful is a word that lets us be open to all types of ways of finding meaning

Nolan - accessible housing should be included. when he lived at sasona there was no railing on stairs... people preferred aesthetic to accessibility

Gatlin - likes mission statement, is well written, but it is too long. people are adding, but we need to be succinct // not creating an encyclopedia article. something will always be excluded. A longer declaration for clarity would be preferable to adding to the mission statement. length is a product of our fractured views as a group. we need to hash that our first.

Hannah - agrees with Gatlin, thought it was concise enough, but perhaps we should make the mission statement and then have a longer declarative statement. Looked at other examples, they had "points of unity" maybe we could do that... googledoc?

Gatlin- agrees... what is our mission? McAllen has been clear; general principle needs to be hammered out from all the larger ideas. What we are trying to say should come before saying it.

Hannah - what she wants: to have a cooperative that faces outwards, interested in being cooperative externally as well

Molly - a larger document should be created, lets expand what we have and then narrow it down to what we really care about. In terms of what our mission statement is: is expanding our biggest goal?

McAllen - maybe discuss this on the listserv, create an in depth description and then get the final wording at the next meeting. First things first: create a coop where people live. Stay focused before we try to save the world.

Greg - use definitions given on wikipedia of mission statement and vision.

Mike – can express more detail using vision statement

Donny -  agrees about the difference between vision and mission, wants a concise mission statement, likes the current draft. His mission: "intersection of cooperative housing, affordable housing, and community projects"

Hannah - does anyone not care?

Agenda item 3- meals and kitchen

McAllen - wants gault to have the same setup as Sasona, 'co-ops are all about the connections' NCBA conference conversation = people should move in another co-op before opsis because opsis basically presents little notion of what cooperation looks like

Gatlin - sharing raw food, ASAP so that we can focus on how cooking will work. Where will we meet, section 8 problems, but aside: we can always share.

Jesse - committee meetings on next weeks agenda

Donny - use common space to store bulk items, kitchen tools

Mcallen - is this  precursor or the totality of the plan?

Victor - it is a way to reach out to current residents.

Hannah  - wants prepared meals, do other people want that or not? How do other people feel about that?

Greg - meet sunday and then plan food for the week. Wants to organically decide meals while we're transitioning.

Molly - clarification about what’s at sasona for meals currently

Gatlin - meal coinciding with meeting. Minimum of one meal, proponent of 2 meals. Can coordinate it informally to start.

Leslie - dinner every night is too much pressure perhaps? 2-3 a week, seconds sharing food at meetings.

Mike - wants to avoid making these decisions beforehand and wait to talk to residents. For example would a family want to eat all together every night?

Molly - possibly supplement 2 meals with potlucks-- wants to have a variety of options.

Donny - support for a couple meals a week as an option... we have many unknowns

Gatlin - discuss what we can do, not what interferes

Hannah - so we should make more structured questions regarding the first group of people who live there

Gatlin - intermediate measures need to be DECIDED.

Agenda item 4 - do we accept section 8 vouchers?

McAllen - no stone should be left unturned to maintain inclusivity. We need more information about our qualifications for accepting section 8. Alternatives to section 8:

- even if we do no accept section 8, we would be an option for those on the waitlist.

- whether or not we accept section 8 members, challenge to members of group: space in the co-op is your oyster for starting projects perhaps involving affordable housing

Victor - perhaps there is no problem, but we need to be weary of becoming a permanent landlord.

Donny - co-op is first and foremost... eviction is not a problem

Hannah - financial and legal solvency is primary, not just a Gault decision, but something that CHEA needs to decide. We need to realize that this takes some serious organization and record keeping. CHEA is legally responsible so the board had some questions:

- what records do we need to keep?

- what do each of the case workers from HOCA need to know?

- what new things do we need to do?

- how can we do this with excellence?

- how can we institutionalize the process beyond original members?

Can we evict people for labor issues, or membership review problems like violence?

Molly - is there a model for this?

Gatlin - discussion with the cold hard facts so that we can have some objective decision-making -- looking for a good samaritan to volunteer

Donny – I will

McAllen - only piece of information we know for sure, we need each unit reinspected to ensure they are up to section 8 code.

Nolan - 1. Sarah is on a program which stipulates that she only needs to pay $200, how are we going to eat those costs (extra $400) when we accept people participating in similar programs?

2. recognize the privilege you have to make this decision -- want to ask people to leave face to face, our long term goals should be considered but we need to realize that these are people’s lives.

Jesse - we set aside money to help people transition, privilege is recognized, now we are tasked with creating a cooperative community, we need to be responsible for CHEA's goal as well.

Mike - we need to find out objective facts, agrees with Gatlin in that sense

Hannah - are these inspections done by HOCA?

McAllen - separate inspections, need more information

Mike - not even sure if its legal to refuse to renew  lease...do you want to informally meet with someone who knows a lot about these issues?

Greg - nonprofit boards - liability is a huge concern, perhaps talk to a lawyer

Hannah - lets create a separate thread of questions we want answered

Greg - A&M has an information database on housing, will look into it.

McAllen - looked up "duty", we have the duty to set up a housing cooperative, that's first and foremost. We're dealing with interests of several groups of people, someone is going to get shortchanged.

Leslie - seconds everything, recognizes that this is  difficult situation, we need to take our time to decide and be careful with government bureaucracies

Gatlin - will be giving $300 in moving expenses

Molly - references documentary and control aspects of receiving aid. Does the co-op mimic some of the restrictions of the government?

Donny - how much section 8 housing is available? Make all decisions with open eyes. Gathering information is what we should be doing. This is someone's full time salary?

Hannah - probably a full time job to be a membership coordinator for nonprofit housing

Nolan - anybody can accept section 8. If you have section 8 housing, you face a lot of discrimination. Even though anyone can take section 8, money and time is necessary for people to find a place.. Take this into consideration

McAllen - wants to do all possible to ease transition.

Hillary - curious about other alternatives, are there other sources of funding? If we're trying to take the moral high ground then we need to consider these as well.

Victor - lets ask people who work for housing nonprofit

Molly - two things, new section 8 residents, versus current section 8 residents, lets focus on current residents

Hannah - current section 8 residents are a test run for the cooperative.

Donny - can we require  a meal plan on section 8?

Hilary - is it fair to take the route of having a meal plan?

Gatlin - facts and questions - could this be solved via signing a statement that says we are using the money?

Greg - has looked into food stamps

Gatlin - being explicit, could that help with these problems? Wants more questions!

Hannah - section 8, can we require labor on section 8...should we talk to/survey residents?

Molly - experienced a co-op class system, is uncomfortable with it.

McAllen - is an advocate for more meals and labor, is open minded about what the majority of what the group wants. Everybody needs to participate in whatever we decide. No one should be allowed to stay without fulfilling the expectation we set up.

Mike - occupancy handbook --> implied voluntary extra fees is ok, but you perhaps can't mandate food. Repeated minor violations is grounds for eviction.

Hillary - can look up nonprofits to help us make these decisions.

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